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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the novel, "A Tenured Professor," by John Kenneth Galbraith, in an exploration of the impact of fictional writing and other popular and mass media on public perceptions of higher education. In the book Galbraith offers his views on his own experience as a leading educator and on the world of higher education. The book tells about the career and personal development of a professor of economics who pursues wealth in order to influence society on the stage of higher education. The book is seen to address four main issues prominent in contemporary higher education: (1) institutional prestige and elitism, (2) faculty autonomy, (3) university politics, and (4) the debate over tenure. The paper examines each of these issues, as developed by Galbraith, using excerpts from the book as examples. It then compares the book's treatment of these issues with Galbraith's treatment of the same issues prior to writing this novel. (Contains 20 references.)(DB)

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An Analysis of Contemporary Academics and John Galbraith's Tenured Professor

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Abstract

The writing of fiction can convey a series of messages about how authors view the world around them. John Kenneth Galbraith, one of the leading educators in the twentieth century, has written a number of novels and works, and in the instance of A Tenured Professor, he offers an insight into his experience and view on the world of higher learning. This novel is analyzed from the perspective of a 'slice of reality,' according to Galbraith, with supporting documentation drawn from leading scholars in the field of higher education administration.

The argument that many fiction writers see their craft as the opportunity to influence reader's perceptions is not new or shocking. In fact, the statement that many authors put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard, for that purpose alone is not considered terribly scandalous. The written word is a powerful tool, and one of the primary values of literature is that it has been used for centuries as a vehicle for making opinions subtly or blatantly known, recording events, and expressing ideas. Literature can be studied to learn about the past, present, and even future. For example, during the English Renaissance of the 1600s, John Donne mused in his poem "Satyre 3" over which religion was that of the true church ordained by God. When Donne wrote his poem, England was in the middle of the Protestant Reformation; the monarchy, the Parliament, and the people all embroiled in the battle over Catholicism, Protestantism, or Anglicanism. Donne expressed quite elegantly his misgiving about the various religions, yet firmly stated that everyone must make a choice if salvation was to be found. Donne knew his audience well and calculated the impact he wished to have on them, writing over 300 years ago.

Today, creative authors continue to know the impact of their carefully written words can wield on the reader, unsuspecting or otherwise. Like Donne, one such modern writer is elegantly expressive, has misgiving about a nearly religious institution, knows that choices must be made if salvation is to be found, and above all, knows his audience. The religious institution in

question is American higher education, the author is Harvard University Economics Professor Emeritus, Dr. John Kenneth Galbraith. In his novel A Tenured Professor, Galbraith opens the door of higher education, smiles because he knows so many of its secrets, then proceeds to invite the world in to hear some of its most heartily debated issues. Why does Galbraith position his novel within the contest of higher education and why does he so purposefully seem to direct his work at a wide audience? Galbraith is an intelligent, experienced individual. Like Donne, Galbraith writes about a topic which is hotly debated during his time. Also like Donne, who became Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London and continued to write provocative religious poetry, Galbraith writes about a world with which he is intimately familiar.

Galbraith has written about higher education and his views of its primary issues in mediums other than fiction. In A Tenured Professor, Galbraith seems to quite purposely step into the public discourse on higher education, and also makes his opinions known to his colleagues in the academic community. An examination of A Tenured Professor and Galbraith's use of higher education issues in his fiction seems a fitting point to begin exploring the impact that fictional writing, and other popular and mass media, can have on public perceptions in higher education.

Born in Ontario, Canada in 1908, John Kenneth Galbraith has experienced much in his lifetime and has become one of academe's

most respected and well-known personalities. Educated as an Agricultural Economist at the University of Toronto and the University of California-Berkeley, Galbraith was appointed administrator of price operations at the U. S. Office of Price Administration when he was thirty-three. At this time he was in control of fixing the price of virtually every item sold in the United States. From this beginning in the U. S. government and national economics, Galbraith went on to become an assistant professor of Economics at Princeton University, and later a full professor at Harvard University. During his professorship at Harvard, Galbraith served for two years as U. S. Ambassador to India, was Director of the U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey, served in the Office of Economic Security Policy, and was Presidential Adviser to John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. Galbraith once said that his height of six feet and eight inches had much to do with his assuming so many and such weighty responsibilities. In his book, The Scotch, he wrote

> The superior confidence which people repose in the tall man is well merited. Being tall, he is more visible than other men and being more visible, he is much more closely watched. (Contemporary Authors, 1990, p. 320)

Whatever Galbraith's motivations for his accomplishments in economics, policy-making, and the professorate, he has not stopped writing throughout his various appointments and responsibilities. Galbraith has used this personal knowledge to write in a wide variety of mediums, such as in fiction, presidential speeches, and academic texts; he has also covered

numerous topics. The author of over 30 books, Galbraith is an educator at heart, whether writing about economics or telling his personal memoirs, there is an ever-present element of instruction. Many titles in Galbraith's body of work demonstrate his position as teacher, for example, How to Get Out of Vietnam: A Workable Solution to the Worst Problem of Our Time, How to Control the Military, and Almost Everyone's Guide to Economics.

In his most recent novel, A Tenured Professor, Galbraith seems to once again subtly attack with the intention to educate. Galbraith demonstrates his knowledge for using fiction to influence others when saying that through his fiction he set out to "engage a larger audience...(my colleagues) would have to react to me. My work would not be ignored" (Contemporary Authors p. 320). "Galbraith can hit a vested interest at any range and shoot folly as it flies, in business thinking, in Washington circles, even in the professorate" (Contemporary Authors, 1990, p. 320) In A Tenured Professor Galbraith takes aim at a number of issues in higher education, an exploration of the book and its text may further reveal Galbraith's plan and intentions.

In 1990 Galbraith wrote his third work of fiction, the intriguingly titled A Tenured Professor. In his book, Galbraith weaves the tale of Montgomery Marvin and his intelligent, driven wife, Marjie. The reader is introduced to Marvin (as he prefers to be called, as Montegomery seems too long and formal) in the last days of his undergraduate career at Harvard. Young Marvin has recently decided to pursue economics as a career, planning to

earn his Ph.D. and become a professor at some influential college or university. Marvin happily tells his Harvard tutor (a faculty member)

> I like economics, especially the technical side. But perhaps I can also do some good in the world. (Galbraith, 1990, p. 24)

His somewhat surprised tutor firmly supports Marvin's enthusiasm for economics, but warns to

> ...watch that business about doing good. It's fine in principle, but a smart economist sticks to his knitting. So stick to it...It's more than enough to be a good scholar. ((Galbraith, 1990, p. 24)

Marvin is torn between his desire for a quiet, scholarly life and his inner feelings of social and political responsibility.

While earning his Master's degree at Cambridge University, Marvin meets Marjie, a woman with an even stronger social conscience than Marvin's, and a bold desire to change the world around her. Marjie convinces Marvin to listen to his conscience, and together, they devise the economic indicator which will eventually make them millionaires and launch them into a powerful position from which to influence the nation. They name their economic indicator the Index of Irrational Expectations, or more popularly termed, the "IRAT." After completing his degree at Cambridge, Marvin and Marjie are married and move to California where they both begin doctoral degrees at the University of California-Berkeley.

After earning his degree and teaching for several years at Berkeley, Marvin is offered a tenure-track faculty position at Harvard because of his

> ...impeccable credentials (Harvard, Cambridge University, Berkeley), an impressive body of work (his study of refrigerator pricing), and the right political attitudes (liberal but responsible). (Galbraith, 1990, jacket)

Once hired, Marvin sets about gaining tenure so that he can begin work on the social causes which he had put on hold for so long. As the title of A Tenured Professor implies, young Marvin is instructed in the importance of tenure early in his academic life. He sees in tenure not only academic freedom, but personal freedom as well. Tenure promises to allow Marvin safety in pursuing activities which may not be altogether smiled upon by the scholarly community. Tenure is achieved by Marvin in an amazingly short period of time (within his first year of appointment), and he sets his IRAT in full motion, becoming a millionaire after a 1980s stock market crash.

After the success of their IRAT, Marvin and Marjie adopt the motto "Positive Power of Wealth," or as Marjie embroiders into the border of her office curtains, "PPW." They live by this motto, investing nearly all of their wealth into liberal ventures aimed at improving the world. The Marvins' first major project involved identifying companies that do not employ women in top executive positions, and then requiring those companies to either hire women or attach a label to their merchandise stating their deficiency. The Marvins fueled a boycott of companies that

refused to cooperate. Another project was the endowment of chairs in peace studies at the military academies. The Marvins then established Political Rectitude Committees (PRCs) to keep Political Action Committees (PACs) in line. Finally, the Marvins succeed in a corporate takeover of an arms manufacturer, declaring the company would slowly begin phasing out its production of armaments for the U.S. government and turn instead to peaceful pursuits. As might be predicted, the government, as well as the financial community, did not welcome the interference of a mild mannered Harvard professor and quickly found a way to divest the Marvins of their fortunes and influence. In the end, Marvin is able to resume his quiet life as professor, while Marjie journeys to Cuba to work on improved relations with Fidel Castro. Harvard welcomes Marvin back to the fold, and Galbraith tells his readers that

> Harvard is proud of its ancient respect for civilized values. If, from time to time, a professor has lapsed from the expected standards of professional, marital, or financial morality or has found himself involved with the Central Intelligence Agency, it is understood, an especially by the older professors at the long table, that these are not matters for excessive comment. This protection, particularly as regards his financial ventures and misadventures, now favored Marvin. (Galbraith, 1990, p. 195)

In A Tenured Professor Galbraith tells a fairly lighthearted moral tale, yet there is a level of seriousness in his tone. In terms of the larger picture, the book revolves around the Marvin's pursuit of wealth in order to influence society. Galbraith encourages his readers to examine their views toward

wealth, the government, and politics, while he draws them into a carefully set stage. This stage is the world of higher education, the underlying theme of Galbraith's work. In her Atlantic review, Adams (1990) remarks that

> Professor Galbraith juggles four victims in this irreverently satirical tale: Harvard, which is always a fine target for the deflationary knife jab; the mass hysteria that causes investors to assume that up is the only direction, official prattle about the American way; and the eccentricities of his own arcane profession. He is, in short, playing fairly as well as funnily. (p. 115)

In A Tenured Professor Galbraith addresses four main issues prominent in contemporary higher education. These four issues, or themes, present in Galbraith's book, are institutional prestige and elitism, faculty autonomy, university politics, and the debate over tenure. Each issue naturally overlaps and influences the others to some degree, and yet they can each be debated within their own right. It is interesting to note how Galbraith brought out each theme in the sphere moving about Marvin's life.

Institutional prestige and elitism are delicate subjects in academe, for those who criticize what they see as elitist views may be criticizing dearly held beliefs about the academy and some of its most treasured institutions. Standards of excellence must be upheld in higher education, yet there is also an increasing demand for accessibility and practicality in colleges and universities. There is in the U.S., and throughout the world, an unofficial ranking of those institutions which are considered the

most and least prestigious. In academic circles the ranking can be particular, varying according to discipline, where the "gurus" of various fields reside, and various other valid and non-valid value judgements. Galbraith takes a slight jab at elitist views within the academy when he comments that on their way from Berkeley to Cambridge Marvin and Marjie stopped for a few days in Washington, D.C., where they had dinner one night with an old friend.

> ...they were joined for dinner by another economist friend from Harvard who had come over from Baltimore, where he was no serving time, as he saw it, at Johns Hopkins University. (Galbraith, 1990, p. 69)

The economist's comparison of Johns Hopkins to a prison sentence is not favorable, and leads the reader to imagine this individual as an Ivy League snob who is bidding his time until release into a more prestigious institution.

Another debated area of prestige and elitism in higher education falls in the realm of publishing. Probably more than any other population in the academic community, doctoral students and untenured professors are aware of the importance of publishing and establishing, accepted publishing houses, as well as with the proper academic journals. Galbraith gives his readers a look at the rewards accorded to those who follow the proper channels of publication.

> Two extracts from his (Marvin's) thesis were published in the ensuing months in the American Economic Review, the diligently selective journal of he American Economic Association, and when these came to the attention of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, inquires were set in motion as to publication of

> the thesis itself. The MIT editor had persuaded Marvin to a simplifying change of title; it was called Refrigerator Pricing: The Theoretical and Mathematical Paradigms. For the Marvins there was to be a major consequence. (Galbraith, 1990, p. 54)

There are, of course, other areas in the academy in which elitism is perceived and argued against. Many factions within and outside of academe are calling for greater equality in higher education and seem to feel that many of the ideals which were once upheld as quality control devices, or standards, are actually roadblocks to fairness and equal treatment within education. Galbraith's tone throughout the novel is quite satirical, yet an examination of A Tenured Professor does not provide enough evidence to grant the reader any concrete certainty regarding Galbraith's own views on institutional prestige and elitism.

A second theme which Galbraith takes up throughout his novel is the idea of faculty autonomy. Galbraith gives an overview of the academic community in his description of the University of California at Berkeley.

> Berkeley, more than most academic communities, is a place of many social levels. At the top are the great university officials -- president, chancellor, deans and the recognized professional stars, those known for their Nobel Prizes, their urgently discussed books, their occasionally urgent summonses to Washington.
>
> Next comes the large, undifferentiated band of scholars, teachers, and scientists, not excluding those who, nervously aware of the frequent condemnation of their occupation, commute daily to the east of the hills to work at the Livermore Laboratories, which are operated for the government by the California university system. There they uneasily contemplate the possible destruction of the planet, their own possible

> role therein and the ill repute in which they fear they are held by the undergraduates and numerous of their neighbors. (Galbraith, 1990, p. 52)

Many types of faculty and administrators, and numerous responsibilities, fall among this varied group. One of the primary responsibilities which has come under recent attack is that of teaching and the amount of quality attention it receives in American higher education. Faculty are often fiercely defensive of their need for autonomy, but recent attacks have asserted that faculty members are not held responsible enough for their time and actions. In the epigram to A Tenured Professor Galbraith comments on one of his characters, stating that,

> To Professor McCrimmon I have assigned certain academic tendencies and attitudes which, over the years, I have sought to resist in myself. (Galbraith, 1990, p. 1)

Indeed, Galbraith uses McCrimmon to call up many images of the professorate which are not positive, yet are widely held as accurate in today's view of higher education. At one point in the story, Galbraith lets the reader into McCrimmon's office to view what many people outside of academe believe to be a common sight.

> Today he was in his office, a light and airy room, the walls lined with bookcases filled rather ostentatiously with technical journals. A small desk was relatively uncluttered; a large filing cabinet bore the label WORK IN PROGRESS. McCrimmon subsided gratefully onto the couch. It was thus that he regularly received his occasional visitor, the even more occasional student. Emerson once said nothing so impairs intellectual achievement as exposure to physical activity, and McCrimmon believed in carrying that advice to the plausible limit. (Galbraith, 1990, p. 19-21)

Earlier in the tale, Galbraith had shared the knowledge that McCrimmon frequently slipped into the campus movie theater after lunch, careful not be observed, where he spent the remainder of his afternoon at work. Regarding teaching, Galbraith lets his reader in on McCrimmon's views, which are shared by some non-fictional professors in higher education. However, a great many faculty members do not share McCrimmon's ideas, and Galbraith's opening makes clear that he, for one, does not support his character's beliefs. Galbraith states that McCrimmon is offered to the reader as a model for how not to approach the professorate. As McCrimmon chats, the Master's student Marvin, like many graduate students, begins to develop his beliefs about academe from older professors.

> Marvin asked about the meetings McCrimmon had been attending "A ritual," said McCrimmon, "in which, as a professor, I feel required to participate. You listen for an hour to a paper you could have read in fifteen minutes. Or, in practice, not read at all. But tell me, what do you do with your time here?"
> "I go to lectures."
> "Are they any good?"
> "I have one professor who reads the proofs of his next book. Sometimes a page slips away onto the floor before he gets to it, and he doesn't even notice. I was told that the same thing happened with Keynes."
> "Lectures," said McCrimmon, "are our most flexible art form. Any idea, however slight, can be expanded to fill fifty-five minutes; any idea, however great, can be condensed to that time. And if no ideas are available, there can always be discussion. Discussion is the vacuum that fills a vacuum. If no one comes to your lectures or seminars, you can have a workshop and get your colleagues involved. They have to come, and your reputation as an adequately popular teacher is saved." (Galbraith, 1990, p. 39)

Galbraith's satirical tone could be read as a handbook of how not to teach and what kinds of attitudes toward faculty autonomy not to adopt. However, Galbraith has other ideas beyond autonomy on which to voice his opinions.

University politics is a deep topic to dive into, yet Galbraith, being a highly influential member of the academy, and someone who has played no insignificant part in university decision-making, takes his stab at politics in higher education. In Chapter One, Galbraith tells his readers about the "long table" in one of the dining rooms of the Harvard Faculty Club. He writes that this table, "by common consent, is the major communications center of the university" (Galbraith, 1990, p. 3) It is not so much that major institutional decisions are made at the long table, but major institutional decisions and current events are discussed. The long table serves as the most open forum in the university, and holds a certain therapeutic value for faculty as it gives them the opportunity to freely discuss issues. It might be said that the long table placates faculty and helps them to develop consensus on various institutional debates.

> ...the conversation at the long table takes a more useful turn -- to some crisis in the management of university affairs...or to the current preoccupation of the faculty or the Faculty Council, where for some time legislation on sexual harassment has been an urgent topic...Very often a professor comes to the long tables with some topic in mind and engages others in his concerns with little regard for their interest or attention. (Galbraith, 1990, p. 4)

Galbraith addresses university politics in various ways throughout A Tenured Professor, generally portraying administrators as individuals who keep their eyes on the financial and reputational soundness of the university, financial soundness coming first. Administrators and their decisions are not necessarily presented in an unkind light, but in a light more harsh and one-sided than that which shines on the professorate. The primary conflict which Galbraith sets up around university politics is that of Harvard's involvement in South Africa. While Marvin is busily earning money, Harvard is being picketed for its holdings in South Africa at a time when apartheid was especially battled against. While university officials want to relieve themselves of the holdings for the sake of reputation, they have to remember financial considerations. When Marvin approaches the university President and Board of Trustees with an offer to purchase all of its South African holdings, they are mercifully saved from any further moral conflict. Galbraith frequently portrays administration as beholden to the tides of public opinions, as can be seen in the South African struggle. The portrayal of administration is not unkind, but does draw the reader's attention to university politics and administration, an area which has been the focus of some debate in contemporary higher education.

The final issue which Galbraith confronts in A Tenured Professor is the extremely timely issue of faculty tenure. As has been previously mentioned, the very title of Galbraith's

novel is somewhat mocking of university practices. Marvin is established as an individual who, after gaining the magical tenure ticket, can easily go about minimally caring for his academic responsibilities while pursuing a private agenda which is contrary to university mores. Fittingly, it is Professor McCrimmon, Galbraith's model of everything higher education should not embrace, who informs Marvin of the importance of tenure. McCrimmon's words echo and reinforce those of Marvin's tutor from his undergraduate days at Harvard. After asking about Marvin's future plans, McCrimmon and Marvin share a brief conversation,

> "I'm going to be an economist, but I want to make my small contribution to the liberal agenda. Peace, a better break for the poor and the inner cities, greater equality in income distribution, government assuming its proper responsibilities. I haven't got it fully worked out yet."
> "Most unwise, said McCrimmon, adding with some emphasis, "most unwise. And certainly impractical."
> "Why, sir?"
> "You simply won't get tenure. Tenure was originally invented to protect radical professors, those who challenged the accepted order. But we don't have such people anymore at the universities, and the reason is tenure. When the time comes to grant it nowadays, the radicals get screened out. That's it's principal function. It's a very good system, really -- keeps academic life at a decent level of tranquility."
> "Suppose one waits until one has tenure to show one's liberal tendencies?" Marvin felt obliged to make some response. "The only sensible course," said McCrimmon. "But by then conformity will be a habit. You'll no longer be a threat to the peace and comfort of our ivied walls. The system that really works."
> (Galbraith, 1990, p. 38-39)

McCrimmon's statements about tenure are not reassuring or heartwarming. On the contrary, his words conjure up images of a

system that only succeeds in fostering sameness rather than promoting academic freedom. Once again, it is difficult to make assumptions concerning Galbraith's personal outlook on tenure. However, it can be safely said that he is aware of the high profile which the tenure debate now holds, and he is also aware of the many angels from which tenure can be viewed. In order to authenticate Galbraith's use of these four prominent issues in contemporary higher education, institutional prestige, and elitism, faculty autonomy, university politics, and faculty tenure, it becomes necessary to examine the placement of these issues in the current discourse on the academy.

Galbraith chooses to convey the intellectual ambiance of higher education through the identification of his themes, institutional prestige and elitism, faculty autonomy, university politics, and faculty tenure. These themes, in addition to bearing attention within the framework of A Tenured Professor, also warrant scrutiny in the professional and academic disciplines of higher education. The current discourse on higher education authenticates these themes, and depicts the environment and culture of contemporary higher education. Analyzing the discourse on these issues will help to validate the larger, societal issues surrounding Galbraith as he wrote. Buchanan provides one example of using this technique of validation with detective fiction, where author Margaret Maron's work is studied to identify the social perceptions of criminal activities. In the case of Galbraith, each of the four dominant themes can be

validated as current and vital to contemporary discussions of the purpose, perceptions, and activities in higher education.

Concerning institutional prestige and elitism, Galbraith relies heavily on institutional prestige as an indicator of both faculty intellectualism and institutional desires. Galbraith makes repeated references to only "prestigious" institutions, and his character's comments directed at many large public universities, such as the University of Texas or institutions such as Johns Hopkins University, are generally condescending. The treatment of prestige in A Tenured Professor seems to stratify higher education into groupings which reinforce the mystique of Harvard and the University of California at Berkeley. Such stratifications are not new to higher education, as evidenced by the annual rankings of universities in such publications as U. S. News and World Report, which rank universities based on student and faculty merit as well as on financial resources and facilities.

The concept of institutional elitism has been well documented in both faculty attitudes and academic literature. Over twenty five years ago Howard Bowen studied the economics of higher education and established five laws of higher education finance. Foremost of these, guiding each of the others, is the idea that the major goal of any university is to gain as much prestige as possible. As prestige carries significant monetary value in terms of federal government funding, and funding by private foundations and trusts, Bowen's contention seems to be

reinforced. Other indicators that prestige and elitism continue to drive higher education administration include the obvious, such as Stanford's attempt to regulate external funding indirect cost rates. There are also not so obvious examples of prestige and elitism such as the National Education Association's report on the disparity of salaries between the top 50 research universities and the remaining 3,450 colleges and universities in the United States. Overall, Galbraith seems to accurately capture the prevailing attitude in higher education that prestige and elitism are desirable in an institution, although not always attainable. Robert Birnbaum (1988) provides a solid treatment of the subject of elitism, describing the efforts of many academic leaders as being directed toward attempts to gain prestige. Johnsrud and Heck (1992) similarly identify institutional prestige and the perceived elite nature of the institution as a "drawing card" for premier faculty, and a major incentive for the motivation of faculty to remain at their current institution or to move to a perceived "better" institution.

The issue of faculty autonomy can be seen in Galbraith's storyline as it is predicated on the ability of college faculty members to control their own schedules and maintain personal control of their professional lives. For example, Marvin repeatedly makes use of his flexibility in professional obligations to work on his IRAT calculations and investments. With Marvin's repeated time away from campus, and his frequent use of his IRAT headquarters at home, Galbraith makes the claim

that faculty time is relatively unaccounted for and in some cases is used for intellectual good. However, Galbraith is careful to represent the ups and downs of autonomy, as Professor McCrimmon is portrayed as taking frequent naps on his office couch. The issue of faculty autonomy, on a national level, has received a great deal of attention and speculation, and has prompted growing controversy. In his 1991 book on the history and realignments of higher education, Clark Kerr notes that faculty autonomy was originally granted to faculty in hopes of encouraging intellectual dialogue and the exploration of knowledge, but has recently been abused. The abuses of faculty autonomy are becoming commonplace in all aspects of faculty culture. Stephen Cohen reports that there is a substantial segment of the professorate which abuses professional privileges and are more apt to utilize their autonomy for personal activities than professional. Oliver Kolstoe concurs in a scathing report on the abuses of the faculty position, claiming that faculty simply repeat outdated lectures, give little attention to student advising or research, and actually focus the vast majority of their attentions on themselves. More recently, an entire edition of the American Association for Higher Education's Bulletin was released which defends the balance and purpose of autonomy, asserting that such freedom is a necessity to effectively manage personal and professional careers.

University politics is the third issue of higher education which Galbraith weaves into A Tenured Professor. According to

Galbraith, university politics pervade the lives of Harvard faculty. Whether at the "long table" in the Faculty Club or in faculty meetings, institutional gossip and deal-making is seen as a way of life for faculty members. Galbraith relies rather heavily on hierarchical positions, including the characterization of senior professors, department chairs, dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and even the President of Harvard. Joseph Gilmour (1991) describes institutional politics as a way of life in most institutions of higher education, particularly when involving faculty in formal and informal governance activities. Gilmour contends that faculty must typically fight for resources, often relying on some form of representative democracy to a faculty senate or council in order to have their collective voices heard. Miller, McCormack, and Newman (1991) note that at some institutions, such as predominantly teaching universities, faculty politics may vary. At these institutions, the political climate may be less severe due to shorter chains of command. Conversely, at larger, more prestigious, research-oriented universities, increased compartmentalization may lead to greater competition for resources. Galbraith's work seems to be an accurate representation of the political nature of higher education. However, Galbraith chose to focus more on the individual faculty member as an agent of political behavior, while much current academic literature suggest a more collective political environment where coalitions and consensus development are becoming the norm (Birnbaum, 1988).

Regarding the issue of faculty tenure as addressed in A Tenured Professor, Galbraith seems to generally support tenure and the job security it brings. Despite seeming to support the value of tenure, Galbraith does allude to a changing nature of the tenure process and meaning of tenure, as represented by Professor McCrimmon's description of granting tenure as a process of maintaining academic tranquility. Within the contemporary university, tenure has become an issue of vital importance, representing job security and academic freedom. Birnbaum depicts tenure as a mechanism for rewards and merit, as well as a means for enabling institutions to maintain a prolonged level of quality. Additionally, James Van Patten (1996) reports that the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has consistently entered the debate about the role of tenure in protecting faculty members in pursuit of intellectual outcomes rather than utilizing the concept to screen-out faculty who may seem unorthodox in their approach to teaching, service, and scholarship.

A current example of the tenure debate has been evolving at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, where five-year term contracts are replacing tenure. In this instance, a process becoming increasingly adopted by other institutions, work performance rather than intellectual discipline seems to be rewarded. Christopher Lucas (1996) argues that tenure, while once the dominant characteristic of faculty life, has become less prominent due to a number of factors such as institutional

effectiveness and public calls for accountability. The trend in decreasing the dominance of tenure within faculty life has also grown from the increasing tendency of faculty members to spend their careers at a series of institutions, rather than focusing their careers at a single university or college. Often called "gypsy scholars," these faculty members find the benefit of faculty life in intellectual, and sometimes financial, pursuits rather than in the stability of lifetime employment.

The tenure issue is well represented in Galbraith's work, and he provides it with both a traditional and skeptical view, as he does with the other three themes. Lucas maintains that there is little argument that tenure maintains a stronghold over the professorate and entire institutions, but the issue continues to become controversial as once plentiful resources become scarce. Additionally, the preponderance of senior faculty continuing their appointments lends to the tenure debate and the issue of protecting select groups of faculty, while simultaneously screening out differing viewpoints on academic and social perceptions.

After examining how Galbraith chose to present his four selected thematic higher education issues, and then authenticating those issues as topics relevant and current in contemporary higher education, it seems important to explore Galbraith's treatment of these four issues prior to his writing A Tenured Professor. Galbraith's prominence in American higher

education has assured him a sufficiently tall podium from which to voice his opinions on various topics.

Concerning institutional prestige and elitism, in A Life in Our Times: Memoirs, Galbraith wrote that he spent his life in close association with five institutions of higher learning, Guelph, Princeton, the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Cambridge, and Harvard. Galbraith writes that of these institutions he felt the least affection, and one could surmise from his comments that he also felt the least respect, for Princeton. He writes that Princeton was the most "aristocratic" institution he was ever associated with, and says "Much of Princeton I remember with distaste" (Galbraith, 1981, p. 18). Galbraith explains that a portion of his distaste for Princeton stemmed from what he perceived to be a poor quality of economics faculty, but goes on to comment that,

> The low quality of the economics faculty was, however, less depressing than the scholarly and social tendencies of the Princeton undergraduates. (p. 19)

Galbraith explains that Princeton's prestigious reputation came first, but was not necessarily upheld by strong academic standards on the part of either the faculty or the students. It was unthinkable that Princeton students should attend a school with less than an Ivy League reputation, and faculty felt quite proud to be employed by such an elite school. However, the rhetoric of prestige and elitism masked the fact that no real academic strength existed. Galbraith recalls that

> [The students] were even more deeply anti-intellectual, though in a more refined way, than those of Guelph. In Canada there was a certain sense of aspiration; at Princeton students, with rare exceptions, felt that they had already arrived...Many of the faculty, reflecting the instincts, ambition or conditioning for academic achievement...were much less distinguished in their social origins than those they taught...quite a few faculty members looked with admiration on the superior social assurance and behavior of their students. (p. 19)

A Life in Our Times was published in 1981, nine years before the release of A Tenured Professor. In his memoirs, Galbraith also expressed his opinions on an issue which had not yet become hotly debated, the demand for higher education to become more accessible and practical. Regarding the prestige of focusing one's scholarly research and teaching on the practical, Galbraith wrote,

> Agricultural economics left me with the strong feeling that social science should be tested by its usefulness. This is a considerable professional handicap. The economists who are most highly regarded in their own time have almost always been those who confined themselves to abstract speculation unmarred by social purpose. Again the prestige of the esoteric as opposed to the exoteric. (p. 27)

Clearly, Galbraith's thoughts were on issue of institutional prestige and elitism long before he began work on A Tenured Professor.

As a faculty member, Galbraith served as a foreign ambassador, was advisor for two U. S. Presidents, worked with the U. S. Department of State, was actively involved in foreign and domestic policy-making, and managed to write prolifically, all while conducting his professional duties of teaching, research,

and service to the university. Galbraith even managed to take a one year sabbatical to Cambridge University. It seems safe to say that Galbraith is in favor of faculty autonomy, as he clearly worked well beyond the reaches of Harvard Yard. However, based upon Galbraith's descriptions of the infamous Professor McCrimmon, he seems to also believe that at least some faculty take advantage of the amount of freedom that comes with academic autonomy. In his memoirs, Galbraith wrote of the quality of instruction in agricultural economics when he taught at Berkeley early in his career.

> All the information useful to students that was possessed by R. L. Adams, the tall and confident professor of farm management, could have been conveyed in an hour or two...What remained was often tedious description, which one could more easily have read. Or, classroom time was spent in discussion. Discussion, in all higher education, is the vacuum which is used to fill a vacuum. (p. 27)

Galbraith's comments closely parallel the advice the not-to-be-trusted McCrimmon passed along to young Marvin. As stated earlier by McCrimmon in A Tenured Professor,

> You listen for an hour to a paper you could have read in fifteen minutes...Lectures," said McCrimmon, "are our most flexible art form. Any idea, however slight, can be expanded to fill fifty-five minutes...and if no ideas are available, there can always be discussion. Discussion is the vacuum that fills a vacuum. (p. 39)

Faculty autonomy was most certainly an issue probing Galbraith's consciousness long before he began writing of Marvin and his IRAT.

University politics is an area of great diversity and also one in which Galbraith had numerous opinions. The late-1960's

were a time of much upheaval and unrest in American colleges and universities, and Harvard was no exception. In his book of letters, speeches, and reminiscences, A View from the Stands, Galbraith devotes one chapter to an article he published in the Harvard Alumni Bulletin in 1968. In this article, Galbraith address the need for university administration to modernize, writing that

> I have argued in the past that the governing structure of the older and more mature American universities is obsolete...what should have been a transitional arrangement for a particular stage of development has become obsolete. (p. 109-110)

Galbraith goes on to outline the changes he feels should be made in the composition of the Harvard Corporation, that institution's principle governing board, in order to bring it up to speed with modern needs. Galbraith addresses another aspect of institutional governance in his November 2, 1963 letter to the editor of The Harvard Crimson, when he addresses the subject of the university's in loco parentis to undergraduates.

> No effort need be made or should be made to protect individuals from the consequences of their own errors, indiscretions, or passions. Parents of Harvard and Radcliffe applicants who feel that their children need a more protective environment should be put firmly on notice so that they may send them elsewhere. (Galbraith, 1981, p. 123)

Galbraith firmly states his opinions on both the Harvard Corporation Board and Harvard's rules regarding undergraduates. These are only two of the many areas of university politics which he has spoken on. It can be easily stated that Galbraith has been mulling over issues of academic politics for many years.

Faculty tenure, possibly the most urgently discussed theme in Galbraith's novel, is in many ways the primary focus of Marvin's story. Again, Galbraith's own words on tenure correlate quite closely with comments made by or about McCrimmon in A Tenured Professor. In the preface to a chapter in A View from the Stands, Galbraith writes

> Academic tenure is a sacred institution; so is the selection and promotion of professors by their peers...I am not quite prepared to propose alternatives. There may not be any. But certainly in economics departs, and I suspect elsewhere in the social sciences, the consideration of candidates for tenure can be, and is, a time for weeding out those with heretical tendency or even an inconvenient inclination to independent thought. (p. 127)

In A Life in Our Times Galbraith writes of his own hiring at Harvard into a tenure-track position, and states that in order to prove himself to be a good tenure candidate he avowed to

> ...repair my academic reputation and show that despite the occupational peripeteia of the previous nine years, I could be a safe and somber scholar...There was fear at Harvard, not wholly illegitimate, that I might concern myself unduly with political activity of this general sort at the expense of the students, scholarly writing and decent academic reticence. (p. 277-278).

Galbraith, of course, succeeded in presenting himself as a safe candidate for tenure, as did his lead character in A Tenured Professor. As Galbraith states, he doesn't propose any alternatives to the tenure process, but he does open the topic to debate and admits his own misgivings about the system. This is perhaps what Galbraith does so skillfully throughout his novel; he brings topics to the reader's subconscious, and then to their conscience, in an exceedingly subtle manner. Galbraith teaches

his readers what he knows about higher education, and presents some of his own viewpoints, still allowing the reader to draw independent conclusions.

Galbraith's novel, A Tenured Professor, tells an entertaining story with a strong underlying current of instruction about American higher education. In order to clearly understand Galbraith's arrangement of his work, the story may be viewed in terms of text, sub-text, and super-text. In other words, the text of A Tenured Professor is the narrative of Marvin's climb up the ladder of financial and professorial success, how he decides to use his success, and how he suffers a fall from fortune. The text is simply the story line of the novel. The sub-text can be defined as the underlying themes, or even morals, which Galbraith inserts into his tale. It is in the sub-text that the four thematic issues of higher education truly come into play. Galbraith weaves his viewpoints of higher education so subtly into his work that readers are almost taught at a sub-conscious level.

The super-text level of A Tenured Professor can be seen when past work by Galbraith is examined and threads of the four thematic issues can be traced through his earlier thoughts. Galbraith has been called,

> ...an antenna and a synthesizer...He senses what is in the air and puts it together and packages it. (Contemporary Authors, 1990, p. 319)

It is certainly true that Galbraith had been sensing and processing the issues of institutional prestige and elitism,

faculty autonomy, university politics, and faculty tenure for some time prior to the writing of A Tenured Professor. The impact that fiction can wield on readers is not unknown to Galbraith. Like Donne in Renaissance England, Galbraith offers to his readers a chance for information on a great and highly debated institution, and the opportunity for them to receive his definition of salvation. John Kenneth Galbraith's representation of higher education in A Tenured Professor is indeed accurate and timely. He succeeded in making his lesson available to a very large classroom, the American public, and possibly was able to inform and shape their opinions according to his lesson plan.

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